DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 605 PS 011 082

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TITLE Child Care Services and Public Policy: A New Perspective.
INSTITUTION Vermont Univ., Burlington.
PUB DATE Nov 79
NOTE 29p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies: *Day Care Services: Early Childhood Education: Early Experience: Educational Needs: *Educational Quality: Finance Reform: *Needs Assessment: Parent School Relationship: *Public Policy: Social Services

ABSTRACT

This paper is directed at those who provide services to young children and to those who define the policies that regulate these services. It concerns a new view of early experience based on a life span view of early childhood in which early experience is seen as a necessary but not sufficient condition for full growth and development. The implications of this new view on public policy for early childhood services and the possible consequence of misinterpreting this view of early experience are discussed. The paper first reviews the present justifications for providing early child care services to families, second, the origins of these justifications and the limits they impose for providing quality early child care and, third, offers a more appropriate foundation to ensure the maintainence of quality early child care programs for families. (Author/MP)

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Child Care Services and Public Policy

A New Perspective

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THE PRESENT BASES FOR EARLY CHILD CARE SERVICES

For the past two decades, we have justified the provision of child care services to families on two premises. First that the early years are disproportionately more important in defining the life course than subsequent life experiences and second that the provision of child care services will provide adults the opportunity to pursue their full growth through continued education and employment. It is becoming increasingly evident that neither of these premises is beyond question. In fact both are undergoing such questioning that unless a more valid foundation for providing child care services to families is found, the provision of these services

will be in jeopardy. This first premise has been defined elsewhere[23,24] as the strong early experience view. As explained by Evans, the strong early experience view argues that 1) children are malleable and through their growth and development can be extensively modified, 2) early experience will cumulatively influence subsequent psychological functioning, 3) children whose early experience are poor are likely to develop in ways that are counter-productive to society; and perhaps most important 4) early intervention is better than later intervention. The early childhood compensatory education programs begum in the early 1960's[6,18,36,39,45,68] as well as the current efforts to upgrade Federal Day Care Standards.[11] are reflections of this strong early experience viewpoint.

Advocates of child services as a necessary prerequisite of services to adults argue that such services will increase the employability of workers, reduce the cost of public assistance, provide opportunities for full growth and development and more generally allow all adults an equal opportunity to participate in our society. Streuer[63] lists three examples. One is income maintenance. "According to this theory the mother must be freed from anything that jeopardizes her attaining and retaining self-sufficiency. Since this includes dependent children, child care must be provided." (p. 59-60). A second example is providing support services to presently self-sufficient families. Streuer says that this approach:

> acknowledges that millions of mothers are working fulltime and that given the costs and availability of good child care programs, they also need help. In essence, this is the middle income equivalent of child care for income maintenance purposes, especially needed by single parents and by families with two working parents[63] (p. 60).

The third example has envolved out of the women's movement. From this perspective, universally available child care, divorced from economic or social considerations, are necessary if women are to have equal opportunity

to participate in America's economic, political and cultural life.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF EARLY CHILD CARE SERVICES

The strong early experience view is actually a fairly contemporary perspective.[41] Just as Watson's[67] behaviorism of the 1920's was a reaction to the Freudian theory[19] that preceeded it, research during the late 1940's and 1950's [69,27] was a reaction to the maturation theories of Gesell,[20] Goodenough[25] and others.[7] Changing views on the relative importance of heredity and environment,[62,69] so called critical experiments on the value of practice in co-twin studies,[44] and research and demonstration projects on the value of early stimulation[27,50] are typical examples of the early work within this strong early experience perspective. The contemporary era of this view dates from Benjamin Bloom's 1964 publication of Stability and Change in Human Characteristics and J. McV Hunts 1961 publication of Intelligence and Experience.

Bloom's[3] analysis of the major longitudinal studies led to a number of conclusions concerning the course of human development. Among these were that "variation in the environment have their greatest quantitative effect on a characteristic at its most rapid period of change and least effect on a characteristic during the least rapid period of change (p.vii) and that "in terms of intelligence measured at age 17 about 50% of the development takes place between conception and age 4, about 30% between ages four and eight, and about 20% between ages 8 and 17" (p. 88). Bloom's conclusion about intellectual development at age four is of course both widely known and held by many teachers and parents of young children.

In Intelligence and Experience Hunt[28] convincingly lays to rest the outmoded views of intelligence as fixed and predetermined. In its place, he provides a learning theory oriented interpretation of Piaget that supports a development epigenetic view "the concept of the match." The concept of the match implies that successful development occurs through the successive, cumulative exposure of children

to increasingly complex and symbolic materials and experiences.

These early works have provided much of the theoretical and empirical justification for the legislation of federal monies over the past 15 years toward programs for young children and their families.

The origins of the child welfare movement, although predating the strong early experience view are still comparatively recent. Takanishi[64] places it around the beginning of this century. Although it is true that the philosophical roots of the movement are still earlier[1,46] "these were the years (1880-1914) when many social movements for children emerged, creating new institutions and professions, which today constitute the fields of child welfare, early childhood education, child development, pediatrics, public health and social work" (Takanishi, 1978, p. 8-9).

According to Rothman[53,55] these early ventures in child care were organized and rum by the socially elite of the community.

> Moral uplift was endemic to the venture, the ultimate purpose of the centers was not merely to allow poor women to earn income but to bring them and their families under the "right influence." (p. 14).

It is clear in these early efforts that the motive was not in providing children a legitimate service but rather providing the mothers an opportunity to work and to insure the future appropriateness of the child's development. This view of the child as a potential resource to be nutured was also reflected in the other child welfare efforts of that era - elimination of child labor, development of a juvenile court system, establishment of institutions for children with special needs, and the adoption of compulsory school attendance laws.[64]

The socially elite were soon replaced by the reformers of the progressive era. These programs aimed for comprehensive child service including day care.

> For a brief time, sone of the well run settlement houses actually seemed to come closest to realizing their ambitions. Hull House in Chicago and the University Settlement in New York for a few years did provide a wide range of service to the children of hard-working immigrants. But in pretty short order, probably by the outbreak of World War I, and certainly by 1925, conditions in the day care centers deteriorated. Inadequate personnel, and custodial care, along with a rapid turnover in staff and cliental, characterized their operations; consistently they grew less popular, the number of licensed centers declining from 694 in 1916 to 600 in 1925. Like so many other social welfare institutions, they enjoyed a brief spurt of seeming excellance and then suffered a prolonged lapse into mediocrity or worse[55] (p. 16).

Rothman attributes a large part of this decline to increased efforts to keep mothers at home with their children. As a result of this shift in social philosophy, children who still attended child care programs quickly became stigmatized as children of the "unworthy poor." As this philosophical change became more widespread, centers were viewed increasingly as less desirable places for children, the children were viewed as less desired playmates and vacancies increased.

> As the quality of care declined, more vacancies were created; as more vacancies occurred, funding became more restricted, as funding declined the quality of administration

fell and the stigma associated with day care centers increased[55] (p. 17). Child care programs today must still cope with this stigma.

Child care enjoyed a short-lived revival during the Great Depression and during World War II. But the closing of the centers with the end of each period clearly showed the effort to be directed at the employment and training of women rather than the development of children.

Rothman marks the late 1960's as the start of the current day care revival. The revival reflects the dream of many adults who saw "day care as a very useful method for facilitating the advancement of their own careers without sacrificing their children's welfare" (p. 22-23).

As Takanishi[64] notes however, progress in not always linear.

> The historical record shows, that the movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has endowed us with a problematic legacy. The reforms became our problems, problems which are themselves subject of contemporary reform effort (p. 9.)

So today we find ourselves taking children out of the special institutions that we once thought could meet their special needs, helping adolescents gain access to occupational sites we once enacted child labor laws to protect them from, shielding them from standardized labeling that was once a reaction to subjective evaluations, and reducing the discretion of the juvenile court system that was once intended to separate children from adults and adult institutions.[64]

And we find ourselves asking if the investment in child care services really benefits anyone. Although the issue is real, the question is incorrectly stated. It should be directed not at the service but at the foundations for those services.

PROBLEMS WITH THE PRESENT BASES FOR DAY CARE SERVICES

Stated bluntly, the problem with childcare is that its foundations are crumbling. As mentioned above, these foundations number two. The first is the strong early experiences view and the second is the provision of service to adults that necessitates the provision of childcare to children.

The strong early experience proponent needs to demonstrate that these early years are disproportionately more important. The policy planner needs to demonstrate a return on his investment in child care services. He needs to show that in some ways children who have participated in early child care programs are subsequently better off developmentally than non-participants. Increasingly research is providing little comfort to either the early experience advocate or the policy planner. For these individuals, the crucial issue is the long term consequence of early development experiences. If they can demonstrate correlations between early and later developmental periods and if further they can show that children having early intervention experiences are at some later time, significantly different than initially comparable children not having such intervention, then they have a firm foundation for advocating quality early childhood programs.

It is important to emphasize that the crucial issue here is not whether services to young children and their families have an impact, but rather the relative permanece of this impact. There is no question that these programs have impact. The question is why the impact seems to fade over time. This issue is crucial for the strong early experience advocate because it is the heart of the hypothesis that these early years are disproportionately more important in defining the life course than subsequent life experiences. It is important for the policy planner because as noted above, it has never been sufficient to justify expendities by claiming that, for instance; they will make one's fourth year more rewarding.

The evidence concerning the long term stability of early developmental events is at best equivocal. Although much evidence has supported a strong early experience position,[65] more recent evidence[10] has suggested that the young child is more resiliant than once thought. Even Hunt[29] has come to acknowledge that "such is the developmental plasticity in the human species that infants considered retarded during the first year of life for lack of reciprocal mothering can make up at least a share of that loss during their second and third years" (p. 128).

The evidence itself falls into one of two categories. The first concerns the reversibility of early developmental trauma. These trauma conditions have been defined in terms of biomedical events related to pregnancy, labor and delivery and the quality of early child rearing conditions.

For example, Sameroff[58] in a recent review failed to find a consistent association between early short term trauma and subsequent developmental status. He notes that the St. Louis studies on anoxia found that although anoxic infants, when compared to non-anoxic controls, did poorly on newborn measures and still showed deficits at age 3, they performed almost as well as non-anoxic controls by age 7. Sameroff also failed to find stable relationships between events related to pregnancy, prematurity, and delivery on subsequent developmental status.

Sameroff believes that the long term significance of early experience depends upon the amount, intensity, and duration of subsequent experiences. Only when an early experience initiates a cumulative sequence would one expect long term predictability.

Although initial work on the long term consequence of early severe developmental trauma was extremely pessimistic as to outcome,[4,22,12,66] follow ups,[59] reinterpretations of data,[57] extensions of data gathering[9] and newer data[51] suggest a much more optimistic prognosis. Kadushin's[33] study of older child adoptions is particularly

relevant.

Older children, classified as "hard to place" by social service agencies are three years of age or older and have usually lived for a period of time with their biological parents or parent. Separation from the parents results from death, abandonment, abuse, or neglect. Because these children are not readily adoptive and because the legal ties of the child to the biological parent are often not completely severed, they may live in as many as four or five foster homes before being cleared for adoption. The early lives of these children are often insecure, inconsistent, indeterminate, harsh and abusive.

Kadushin evaluated success of placement for a group of 91 children (51% female, 49% male) between five and twelve years of age at the time of adoptive placement. The children's early histories are characterized by large families (52% had five or more siblings), sustandard housing, low income, poorly educated parents (only 2% of the fathers completed high school), high parental conflict, physical neglect and emotional indifference.

The children experienced several changes of residence (average 2.3) before adoptive placement and were in their middle teens at the time of follow up. Success of placement was determined through separate semi-structured interviews with each adoptive parent. The focus of the interviews centered on the parents' satisfactions with the adoption, the problems encountered, and the adaptations they made. Two measures were obtained from the interviews. The first was a satisfaction-dissatisfaction ratio derived from the transcripts of the interviews; the second, a checklist which provided an overall measure of satisfaction in the adoption experience.

Drawing conclusions from the composite of the two measures, Kadushin judged 78% of the adoptions successful, 13% unsuccessful, and 9% mixed. In an attempt to explain the findings, Kadushin examined a number of possible factors.

Acceptance of the adoptive child as a member of the family and a lack of self-consciousness on the part of the parents concerning their adoptive status were the two factors correlating positively with outcome.

Given the very high percentage of successful placements, it is reasonable to conclude that for most children the influence of their present environment more than offset the influence of their past environment.

What is particularly significant about Kadushin's study is when the intervention began. The earliest placement was at the age of five, a time most strong early experience advocates use as a cut off point, i.e., the time beyond which intervention should have limited impacts. It would be wrong however to conclude from research such as Kadushin's that these early years are unimportant. Rather, they support a view similar to the one expressed by Kagan and Klein[34] in the discussion of their work with Guatemalyan Indian children. They conclude that:

> These data do not indicate the impotence of early environments but rather the potency of the environment in which the organism is functioning. There is no question that early experience seriously affects kittens, monkeys, and children. If the first environment does not permit the full actualization of psychological competencies, the child will function below his ability as long as he remains in that context. But if he is transferred to an environment that presents greater variety and requires more accommodations, he seems more capable of exploiting that experience and repairing the damage wrought by the first environment than some theorists have implied. (p. 960).

The early intervention literature is another area evaluating the influence of early developmental trauma. Notwithstanding recent papers by

Palmer and Siegel[45] and Seitz, Apfel, and Efron[60], most follow-up studies[5] have found little evidence for the long lasting effects of early intervention programs. These negative results have of course been interpreted in a number of ways. Bronfenbrenner[5] argues that permanence will only be demonstrated when the family is given a more significant role in the intervention process. Jensen[32] believes that the deficits are primarily genetic in origin and therefore not sensitive to environmental manipulation. Rohwer[54] and Elkind[14,15] each believe that the prime time for intervention is not the preschool but rather the elementary school years. Finally Ginsburg[21] finds the deficit present in the culture, not the children.

Studies of longitudinal growth and development provide still another source of evidence concerning the stability of early developmental characteristics. As hypothesized by Clarke[8]: "if in early life the basic characteristics of the individual are firmly laid down as a result of genetic and experiential factors in combination and interaction, then one would expect a high correlation between personality assessments of the very young child and those of the same individual when adult" (p. 1067). Evidence from longitudinal studies does not support such a hypothesis.

The Fels study[35] found virtually no correlation between adult behaviors with child behaviors during the 0-3 and 3-6 age periods. Significant predictors of adult behaviors did not appear until the 6-10 age period and then were not only low in magnitude but only present if the behavior was consistent with culturally sanctioned sex role standards. For Kagan and Moss, it was the years of 6-10 and not the preschool and infancy years that were the

critical periods. They conclude that the first four years of contact with the school and peer environments crystallize behavioral tendencies that are maintained through young adulthood.

MacFarlane[42,43] summarizing results from the Berkeley longitudinal studies noted that only one third of the adult status predictions derived from early childhood indicators proved accurate. Approximately 50% turned out more stable and effective as adults than predicted, 20% less so. In discussing the 20% that did less well than predicted, she observed that:

> here too the theoretical expectations were rudely jarred by the adult status of a number of our subjects who early early had had easy and confident-inducing lives. As children and adolescents they were free of severestrain, showed high abilities and talents, excelled at academic work and were the image of success. One now sees among them at age 30 a high proportion o brittle, discontented, and puzzled adults whose high potentialities have not been actualized, at least of now.(42 p. 339)

It is again important to stress that these findings should not be interpreted as showing that ones early years are unimportant. Rather they raise questions about the theoretical relevance of these early years for determining the course of development and the justification of services to young children. To argue that an event is necessary but not sufficient does not make it any less necessary. In fact, I know of no research at any other point of the life span that has as consistently shown significant pre-post test differences as the early childhood education intervention literature.

Yet because of our support of an increasingly questionable view of early development, we find ourselves making excuses for the failure of a theory rather than advocating for the repeatedly justified success of a program.

The coattailing of child care service onto adult programs can be justified if the economic benefits of such an arrangement outweigh the costs, if the economy can absorb the additional workers, and if the child care provided through the adult oriented programs is quality child care. Unfortunately these conditions are not, and apparently, have never been present.[53]

Husby[30] using a large computer simulation model attempted to determine if the combined investment in child care and job training for welfare mothers and in some instances their actual employment would be cheaper than simply maintaining families on public assistance. His conclusion is clear; it would not.

> Furthermore, if the program includes child care of high quality the additional costs of day care and training outweigh any savings that are made in welfare payments because of the families increased self-sufficiency.(30, p. 424)

Husby's conclusions would be modified if economic conditions result in an increase in the number of limited skilled individuals in the labor force. Unfortunately this is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.

In discussing his findings, Husby cautions the reader that his simulation model was based on short term cost/benefit ratios. If one were to project potential long term economic benefits through maternal employment

or even eventual offspring employment than the model clearly underestimates the benefits.

Both Roby[53] and Cohen and Zigler[11] argue that one of the main stumbling blocks to the provision of quality child care is the patchwork funding pattern that is the consequence of coattailing child programs to adult programs. The control of day care quality is placed in agencies not primarily committed to the welfare of children.

> The Federal Government has over sixty different funding programs for child care or child development. Each piece of Federal Legislation creating this funding maze built a separate vertical delivery system. Each system has different goals, little horizontal exchange of information between it and other programs, a different category of eligible clientele, separate offices, different procedures and guidelines, and different geographic boundaries defining local committees for planning and service delivery. Initially each piece of federal legislation was created to meet the needs of a separate interest group and government bureaucracy . . . Children's needs were secondary for these program planners.(53, p. 134)

In some ways it would be nice to lay all the blame on the federal government. To do so however, would overlook the contribution that child development and social service providers have made to this mess. The present pattern of service delivery is becoming increasingly specialized and insular at the very time it should be becoming more diversified, cooperative and comprehensive.

Polier[47] traces our failure to develop comprehensive service to our social belief that "each family is responsible for its children (barring

disaster) without the aid of public intervention" (p. 497-9). Prior to the Depression of the 1930's, there were virtually no child services directed at children in their own homes. Since then, there remains a "steady resistance to government aid to children beyond corporal or physical protection, and to any comprehensive planning to support the development of children within their own family" (p. 496).

Both Knitzer[37] and Lewis[40] believe that providers of child services inadvertently maintain the stigmatized image of child care that Cohen and Zigler[11] and Rothman[55] portray by their reluctance to view day care as a service to normal children and families as well as to those with special needs. In effect, private providers of child care services have simply duplicated the non-overlapping array of specialized services that characterize government programs. Certainly this specialization and differentiation must be acknowledged as an attempt to be compatible with government funding patterns but I think it also reflects a view of ourselves that equates increasing professionalism with increasing specialization. How many universities, for instance offer graduate and undergraduate degrees in interdisciplinary programs in social work and child and family studies?

Not only is the problem one of increasing specialization but also one of conflict between these various groups. As Baumrind[2] notes there will always be a major philosophical chasm between those who advocate for children's rights and those who advocate for children's welfare. Whereas the former lobby for reduced intervention by the state in the lives of all citizens, the latter favor both the public and private sections intervening to improve the well-being of all citizens.

Among child-welfare advocates, there are unnecessary and counter productive divisions, nowhere more clearly reflected than in the issue of child care need. Even the more conservative estimates of the cost of providing fully staffed and equipped child care facilities for all preschool age children runs into the billions. However as Emlen[16] convincingly argues, much of this estimate is based on the assumption that child care centers are necessarily better for the child than the informal home care arrangements that are more common.

> By assuming that informal child care arrangement in family settings as part of the need, when in reality they are the nation's primary natural resource for good day care, the myth alleges need that does not exist and makes widely inflated estimates of consumer demand(16, p. 24).

Although the home care delivery system that Emlen and his colleagues developed in the Portland, Oregon area may be less feasible in other locations, it is still a viable alternative for meeting the care needs of young children.

A recent paper by Robins and Spiegelman[52] draws a similar conclusion. They focused on the economic impacts of various models of providing care services to young families. They conclude that any form of direct subsidy to care providers may not be "an economically efficient way of allocating resources toward the preferred choice of consumers. Indirect subsidy methods, such as a voucher scheme may be more efficient" (p. 73). It is clear from the work of Emlen and Robins and Spiegelman that a diversity of service modes is the preferred option.

Issues such as home or center care raise further issues. What kind of training is necessary to provide quality child care? Can quality care come

from within the family or the community? Rothman[55] for example, sees the child care center movement as simply a future step in the tradition of benevolence flowing from the top down, from child welfare or pedagogy to the poor and their children. And as Knitzer[37] has noted, their divisions tend to reflect special interest.

> The point is that any commitment beyond rhetoric would involve challenges to special interest groups such as union, professionals and boards of trustees involved in child and youth care, and challenges to the deep seated biases of broad segments of the American people. All of the source of resistance can mobilize massive political and financial pressure for maintaining the Status Quo (37, p. 801).

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

The central thesis of this paper is that our traditional bases for providing early childhood services are not beyond question. In fact, there are enough questions being asked that it is worth considering the framework for a new perspective on the justification of services for young children and their families.

This new perspective is based on a life span view of early childhood. From this perspective, early experience is seen as a necessary but not sufficient condition for full growth and development. As such, arguments for early services based on the longevity of their impact are likely to find themselves without empirical support. Further since early benefits are not permanent, a greater importance must be placed on the continuity of developmental services. This new perspective sees these services as the legitimate

right of all young children - not because of who they might become or who else might benefit, but because of who they are.

The belief that this new perspective is likely to be misunderstood concerns how public policy planners will come to interpret the phrase "necessary but not sufficient." I fear it will be seen as a justification for the funding of minimal services which in term will come to be seen as custodial service. Such a course of events would indeed have grave consequences for children and families and would represent a gross misunderstanding of the position. Jerome Kagan's experience provides a good illustration of this potential problem.[61] His research[34] showed that young children may be less adversely affected by negative early experiences than we have come to believe. In fact he suggests that the increasing developmental gap between children of the privileged and non-privileged in our country may be as much as reflection of our age-graded society as difference in their early years. Kagan believed his findings would be welcomed by researchers. He was wrong.

> Here is what I think I have said, publicly and in print. One the environment of the infant influences the infant from the moment he's born. No argument; everyone agrees. The disagreement is: how resilient is that child to recovering lost function if the environment should change? I say he is more resilient than any of us surmise. Now that statement does not say that you would not worry about how an infant gets started. It is not fair to conclude that because a child has the capacity to develop that therefore we should give children toxic experiences in the first few years.(61, p. 80)

William Kessen[61] provides a very convincing explanation as to why Kagan misjudged the reaction to his findings.

> Kagan's report had lifted a great burden from the doubters in Washington. I was saddened to hear of this for exactly this reason. The re-evaluation of his data, his own re-evaluation of his data, its conflict with lots of other observations that have been made, will not be appropriated and fully addressed, but somebody will leap to the implementation of this because it is convenient and cheap and fits with the prejudices of the administration to take no social action.(61, p. 81)

Those who value this new perspective must be even mindful of its potential for misinterpretation.

To begin this new framework requires that we re-examine how we fund services for young children and their families, how we train individuals to provide these services and how we coordinate the provision of these services.

As noted above, funding patterns are, at best, patchwork. They reflect add-ons to what are essentially adult oriented programs or they are based on some special category of need. Efforts need to be made to change this pattern.

Funding for service can no longer be based on what they might allow adults to do but rather what they might allow children to do. Service delivery would no longer be funded on a particular category of child care but rather on the legitimate need of all children.

To accomplish this transition, two things need to happen. First social service providers must come to view child care programs as a legitimate need

of all children, in all families. Florence Ruderman's[56] conclusions seem no less relevant today. First, "that the development of widely available, high quality child care services is handicapped by social works failure to relate day care to the normal child and normal family" (p. 339-40) and second

> that day care should be developed and formulated as a child care program when supplementary care is needed. The emphasis should be on the child's ability to adjust to and benefit from such a program. The family's economic or social circumstances should not be a part of the definition of the service. Day care is primarily a child care program, on all levels of society for normal children and normal families.(56, p. 341)

If change in service orientation is the first prerequisite, then a change in training orientation must be the second. The recent history of training in both social service and child development has shown them to follow the increasingly specialized formats of most academic disciplines. Try as we might we in academia have yet to convince the world to align itself along subject matter disciplines. Perhaps we ought to go to the mountain.

We need to develop combined programs in social service and child and family development. Graduates of such programs would be able to enter the world with both a knowledge of the needs of all children and families and the skills necessary to meet those needs. This first step must be taken by the universities and colleges.

One of the basic assumptions of a strong life span view is that quality early developmental experiences are a necessary but not sufficient condition

for full development. Translated into practice, this assumption underscores the need for greater cooperation between families and service providers and among service providers. We know very little about such cooperation. Perhaps this fact is some indication of how far apart our increasingly specialized foci have taken us.

What do we know about home/school continuity for instance clearly supports Bronfenbrenner's[5] conclusion that "without family involvement, intervention is likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued" (p. 470).

Powell's[48, 49] analysis of parent-caregiver relationships in day care settings found the "highest frequency of parent-caregiver exchange occurs at the transition point when parents leave and pick up their children at the center" (p. 5). Telephone contacts were the next most frequent communication made and parent conferences, always a strong component of preschool programs, last (less than 25% of the parents had a scheduled conference with center staff). When one considers the confusion at the transition time, the fact that some parents never even leave their car, the fact that at pick up most parents are tired and eager to get home, and that because of staggered staffing patterns a particular child's caregiver is less likely to be present than during the middle of the day, it's a miracle that any communication takes place at all. Where good parent-caregiver communication existed it was more a function of informal friendship networks than planned efforts to enhance continuity. Powell'sconclusion is bleak.

If these research findings are used to construct the social world of day care children, the image which emerges is one of fragmentation and

> discontinuity. For many children it appears the boundaries of the child care center and the family are sharply defined and narrow in intersection. Evidences of system interdependency are few. The world is a disconnected one, with the child's family, other children's families and the day care center functioning as independent, detached systems.(48, p. 18)

We must devote greater effort to finding ways of improving the quality of cooperative effort between family and social service providers and among social service providers. Not to work cooperatively clearly negates what good each of us does individually.

In summary, this new perspective advocates a strong life span view of early experience and an increased emphasis placed on the maintenance of early childhood gains through increased cooperation. Evidence does not support the argument that quality early childhood experience innoculates the child against subsequent adverse conditions. Nor does it support the argument that the provision of child care will necessarily facilitate the training and re-entry of adults into the labor market. In an era of increasing accountability, we must adopt a more legitimate rationale to advocate for the needs of young children and their families.

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